

Halo: Defenders' Fall

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Summary: CHAPTER TWO IS UP! Defenders' Fall is the story of six soldiers, caught up in humanity's latest civil war. However, nothing is ever as it seems... Rated M for strong language and violence.

1. Prologue

Halo: Defenders' Fall

Disclaimer: My story. Not my game, movie, book, or anything, but my story. Mine.

AN: This story is a revised version of something I wrote about five years ago, and after I found it I realized it was choppy, rushed, and all around just plain out bad. So, here I am, rewriting. Defenders' Fall is set in the Halo world, but is an obviously ****non-canon**** work inspired by many things. Obviously, the main inspiration is the game Halo. The personal adventures and comic memories inspired by playing the game with friends write themselves. So I would like to thank all of the people involved in this story for their inspirations, and the fine folks at Bungie for bringing us all together. Enjoy. :)

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><p>Halo: Defenders' Fall

****Prologue****

The year is 2662. Humanity, after years of fighting a losing battle with the Covenant, seemed destined to be annihilated. The SPARTAN project was a failure, each and every last subject meeting a gruesome death. While their efforts increased morale exponentially, in the end humanity was in the same hopeless situation, facing certain death against impossible odds. With all of their planets either conquered or glassed, it seemed as if it would end where it all began: Earth.

As humanity prepared itself for a final defense, hope was gone. Similar to watching a missile drop to the planet, the human race merely waited and watched, preparing to be smote into oblivion. But it never came. Soldiers looked to the sky, expecting motherships and nuclear warfare, and saw only clouds. Refusing to let their guard down, leaders from around the globe checked, double-checked and then triple-checked all of their radars, search devices, and spy modules, only to find nothing. Just before total victory, the alien gathering known as the Covenant had simply disappeared, as if it had never existed.

Earth had never had more joyous days. For truly the first time in the history of its existence, humanity loved one another as brother and sister, celebrating their good fortune and determination to survive. Nations shared intelligence and resources, worldwide economy prospered, and people of every shape, size, color, and religious background loved and accepted each other as they were. It was truly heaven.

However, as it happens so often, humanity destroyed its own perfection. It started out small. Smaller countries needed to expand, but the world was once again too small for its expanding population, so new planets were colonized and war-torn ones were rebuilt. Once this had transpired, humanity sought peace again, only to find jealousy and greed. Newer planets felt they were more important, and that the older planets needed to be done away with to preserve resources. Older planets saw this as an act of treason, and demanded something be done to keep the newer planets in check. All of these problems, unavoidably, found their ways back to Earth, making it a No Man's Land of intergalactic civil war.

It was during this time that people began to realize separation. Some sided with the new planets, saying that humanity thrived with change and it needed to lose the old to support the new. Some sided with the elder planets, arguing that they had survived this long and changing the normal order of things was too risky. Soon the differentiators split themselves into political "parties". There were debates. Arguments. Violence.

Fed up with the stubbornness of the elder planets, the newer planets decided to move forward, with or without the rest of humanity. They called themselves "Potentialists", and not long after seceding from Earth they elected a leader: Benedict Peak. Peak became the most socially acceptable leader since JFK; he was young and attractive, with a quick wit and wild ambition that awed men, enticed women and became the stuff of children's dreams. With his aspirations and work ethic, Peak quickly rose to the top of the Potentialist hierarchy. Despite his party's radical and violent ways, Peak radiated such confidence and charisma that even his enemies held him in high regard.

Due to the rise of the Potentialists, the authorities of the elder planets created their own political party. They christened themselves "Reclaimers," and used propaganda to brandish Peak and his Potentialists as threats to intergalactic peace. Instead of abiding by a single ruler, the Reclaimers decide to form their own Parliament, the members of which rule over the entire government.

As is the nature of politics, both sides had disagreed to such a

degree that there became talks of war. Members of Parliament went missing, and the Potentialists were naturally blamed. Potentialists retaliated by acting as if they were being bullied by the Reclaimers. Earth became just as divided. Neighbors mistrusted each other, prejudices were formed, and the media did its best to worsen the situation even more. Humanity was tense, and everyone was waiting for the straw that broke the camel's back.

Eventually, it came. One August day, Benedict Peak and his closest advisors gathered to try and find a peaceful way to reconcile with the Reclaimers. Peak felt that their cooperation was required to ease tensions and cease the violence that had followed their petty rivalry. Perhaps, he suggested, the two forces could work together as they once had in an effort to create one solution to the problem that was the galaxy.

Then all hell broke loose. Dozens of soldiers, clad in the Reclaimer's blue-and-green color scheme, invaded Peak's estate and began coldly and efficiently eliminating everyone in the room. Benedict escaped with the help of his most trusted advisor, dashing out an underground tunnel as she stayed behind, clinching his escape as sniper rounds punctured her body.

It was Sylvia Peak. She was Benedict's wife.

As Peak emerged from the tunnel into a nearby stronghold, his grief overtook him. Normally a cool and calculating leader, the emotional and psychological trauma of watching his wife and advisors being shot down devastated him. An attempt on his life took those he loved most, and ironically he was the only survivor. The bright young leader, who had visions of "a happy tomorrow," had died. Peak's heart had become stone, and he claimed himself "The Sovereign" of the Potentialists.

The Sovereign's reign was cruel, uncaring, and merciless. He completely ignored the pleas of his people, focusing solely on obtaining revenge. Dressing his soldiers in red and orange to illustrate his anger and hate, Peak had become the galaxy's most feared individual in a matter of months.

Using Covenant technology, The Sovereign began teleporting his forces to weaker Reclaimer planets, conquering them in mere weeks. The Reclaimers were taken aback by Peak's mindless rage. Every diplomat sent for negotiations was sent backâ€missing everything from the neck down. Deciding nothing could be done to prevent the outcome, the Reclaimers dispersed as many of their forces as possible to defend the home soil.

And thus, the War for One beganâ€

* * *

><p>AN: Whaddya think? Better than before, no? I know, it's short, I'm just setting a basis so people know what the heck's going on. The chapters are much longer and better, I promise. Please R/R, so I can make the future chapters much better. Don't be too harsh...

Halo: Defenders' Fall

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A/N: Awright! Let's get this show on the road!

* * *

><p>Halo: Defenders' Fall</p>

****Chapter One****

****Origin Destiny****

It was too damn cold.

That was the first thing Elijah Smith noticed as he entered the crowd. It was the last day of the year, which meant one thing for every nineteen year old: Time to pack your things, kiss your momma and get deployed by the military to God-knows-where for God-knows-how-long. Time to go to some planet you can't even spell, hide out in some base that you have no idea how many people have died in, and kill some Potentialist bastards. Time to leave behind life as you know it, and they can't even turn the heat on.

Elijah shifted in his cobalt armor and sighed as he looked for a place to stand in the crowd, comparing the sight to cows waiting around for the slaughterhouse. There were hundreds of future soldiers here, each in their little personality cliques. There were the tough guys, trying to be all quiet and shifty eyed. They tried to stand away from everybody else because they were "the big bad loners who don't need nobody," but they all kind of stood in the same area. Then there were the momma's boys, the wide-eyed ones who didn't know who to clean their damn clothes, much less kill somebody. Everyone else was either trying to mingle, bored, or had already lost their minds with worry. Elijah sighed again as he looked for a familiar face.

His annoyance turned into relief as he saw a tall, stout, teal-armored figure waving to him from across the big, metal, box they called a room. Joshua Latham, one of Elijah's squadmates from training, grinned as he saw Elijah. "Oy! 'Lijah, get your ass over here!"

"I see ya, ya big lummo, hang on." Elijah replied with a smile. Out of the five other squadmates that made his team, Josh was the one Elijah gelled with the most. While Josh was the more physical one, Elijah complemented him perfectly with a more strategic approach. While he wasn't an Einstein by any account, Elijah admired Josh's quick wit and optimism in any situation.

As he reached his friend, Josh grabbed him in a bear hug and lifted him up like an empty barrel. Latham was nothing short of a powerhouse, standing six-foot-seven and weighing a good two-eighty-five by Elijah's guess. Then again, Elijah himself was six-foot-one and barely one-fifty, so lifting him wasn't a gargantuan feat. With a loud, overbearing laugh, Josh released him, letting him fall the extra six inches.

"Wow, Josh, you lifted _me. _You been working out?" Elijah quipped with a smirk.

"Now, now, 'Lijah, you know I'm naturally this big. All I do is stay on my steady diet of eggs, red meat, and your mom."

"TouchÃ©." Elijah laughed. "Any other TBOMers here?"

Josh grinned. It was he that had thought of the name TBOM for their squad, selling that it stood for absolutely nothing, but the point was to make people ask. The absurdity of the idea couldn't be refused, and it made for great comical relief during five-a-day conditioning. "I think I saw Ben and Shyam when I came in. You know Sid was almost definitely one of the first ones here, and there's no way of knowing if Carter's here, the midget."

Elijah grinned as he searched for his squadmates. "I think I found him."

"Eh?"

Elijah pointed towards a commotion in the crowd. As they worked their way to the situation, it became more and more clear what had been going on. Two soldiers were holding another, a seemingly unnecessary feat considering the agitator was only about five-foot-six. However, with the tussled red hair, flaming green eyes and as-of-now-burning face that accented his freckles, William Carter James Yates III was unmistakable. His bright green armor seemed two sizes too big, but he was moving with surprising dexterity, dodging the two in his way as he tried to reach another, spouting obscenities and unintelligible combinations of growls and words.

"Say it again, you dirty sonuvabitch! I DARE you to say it again! I'll kick your ass this side of the Mohican, you yellow-toothed goat-loving smart ass! You just wait till I get to you, you good-for-nothing-lying-cheating-bastard! I'll whoop your ass till your mother puts you back in the womb!"

Elijah sighed, something he felt like he had done too much since he got here. "Did he just say 'this side of the Mohican'?"

Josh shook his head and rubbed his temples. "I'm more concerned he called him a goat lover."

Elijah recognized the two attempting to hold him back as Benjamin Snyder and Shyam Patel, the buddy-buddy one-two punch of TBOM. Shyam, a dark skinned, well-mannered soldier, was considered by a majority of his instructors to be the brightest recruit since SPARTAN-117 himself, the hero of the First Covenant War, back when MJOLNIR armor wasn't standard. His normally smooth, jet-black hair was now spiked with sweat.

"Carter, would you ease off?!? You already broke his nose!"

"Bastard's lucky he got away with just that!"

The other soldier between Carter and certain dismemberment of the victim was Ben Snyder. Elijah had known Ben since the first day of camp, thirteen years ago, and he still didn't know what to think of

him. At first, Elijah thought he was cannon fodder, just another body to use to shield bullets from the real soldiers. For crying out loud, the guy was banned from driving the Warthog because he used the wrong pedals! Elijah thought for sure that he'd be cut or killed by the time he was fifteen. However, then came the day of their first field test, during which Ben eliminated twenty-four enemies by himself, each and every one of them meeting their end in a different way. To this day, Elijah was amazed by Snyder's killer instinct, even though he couldn't even spell 'instinct.' The strain in Ben's face was hardly noticeable with his bright blonde hair and piercing blue eyes, capped off with his trademark stupid grin.

"Could we please stop hitting the card guy? I was having funâ€¦I like blackjackâ€¦"

"I'm having fun now! Let me at him, the fat-nosed, dick-lessâ€¦Where's my rifle?!?"

The soldier with the broken nose, still disoriented and covered in his own blood, rose to his feet. He was easily six-foot-four, and didn't really look like a slouch. If Elijah didn't know Carter, he'd be impressed. Now, it was just one of those days. Broken Nose wiped the blood of his face and pointed a cowardly finger at Carter.

"Youâ€¦You keep that freak on a leash! He's lucky I don't shoot him right here and now!"

Carter continued to struggle. "You're lucky I don't break your legs off and shove them up yourâ€¦DID YOU JUST CALL ME A FREAK?!?"

Shyam groaned. "Aw, son of aâ€¦"

With a roar, Carter did a combat roll between Ben and Shyam, then leapt for Broken Nose, his eyes burning with hate and anger. Elijah began to look away, because when Carter gets his hands on somebody it gets rather nasty, but he was captured back into the moment when he saw Carter stopâ€¦in mid-air.

Josh chuckled. "It's about time he stepped in."

Holding Carter by the neck of his armor, like a mother holding a puppy, was an intimidating figure. His black armor reflected light back into the crowd, giving him a demanding presence and adding to the effect even more. Carter squirmed and kicked.

"Aw, come on, Sid, just one punch! I swear, that's all it'll take! I'll go up to him, BAM, he falls down, I tell him to burn in hell, maybe spit on him or something, then I go about my business."

Sid. Elijah checked him off to finish his mental TBOM checklist. Everywhere Sid went, attention followed. Nicknamed "The Gentle Giant" by his instructors, Sid only stood about six-three, but his sheer size made him seem six-seven or six-eight. Of course, many didn't know Sid really detested violence because he didn't talk that much, but knew he could use his intimidating appearance to get the job done. Even Josh avoided his angry side, and it seemed like he was the only one who could keep Carter in check. A little more serious than Elijah normally cared for, but Sid enjoyed a good time just as much as the next guy, he just wasn't as vocal about it.

Sid rubbed his dark brown goatee as he let Carter hang in his grip.
"No can do. You broke his nose. Be happy with that."

Carter groaned. "You never let me have any fun."

"C'mon, now, there was that Mitchell guy."

"That was ONE TIME! ONE TIME you let me beat up a guy!"

"You grabbed him by the head and broke a brick with it."

Broken Nose gulped.

"And you always remember that one! Can't I give you one even better?"

"Not today." Sid finished with a smile, as he set Carter down.

"Fineâ€|" Carter grumbled. As he reached the ground, the red-maned sharpshooter gathered his money and joined the group of Elijah, Josh, Ben and Shyam.

"You can never just...flip off a guy, can you?" Shyam shot between breaths.

"Shut up."

Sid turned his gaze to Broken Nose. "You. You never apologized to my friend."

Broken Nose rubbed his hands together and began to shrink a bit.
"Come on, Stewart, he started it. You saw, I was just dealing, his card flipped over, big whoop, it happens. Then he accuses me of cheating! I didn't do anything."

Like a bullet, Sid dashed towards Broken Nose, held him by the throat, and brought him nose-to-broken-nose with himself.

"Big whoop, huh?"

Elijah was certain Broken Nose had soiled himself by now.

"S-S-Sorry, Car-Car-Carter. Won't happen again."

Sid smirked. "Thanks. And my _first _name is Sid. Sid. Then Stewart. I don't like being called by my surname."

"Right."

"Rightâ€|"

"Right, Sid. Gotcha."

"Glad to hear it." Sid let him go, and even though Broken Nose had a good inch on him, he dropped to the floor like a dead weight.

Sid completely ignored the staring crowd and joined his friends with a worried face. "Do you think he bought it?"

Josh laughed. "He hasn't shit himself like that since he was a baby."

Sid frowned. "I detest physical intimidation."

Elijah patted him on the back, an impressive feat comparing their size. "No problem, buddy, you did a good job. Everyone still fears you like an Incan god and Carter doesn't have a murder charge on his hands. Problem solved."

Sid let loose an uneasy smile, but said nothing. Elijah was about to continue helping Sid's confidence when he was interrupted by the Lieutenant at the front of the room, who was standing on a pedestal to reach a large microphone. He had black, curly hair, and it was long enough to graze his chin, but it naturally parted in front of his face. He seemed about average size, but Elijah noticed multiple scars and bruises that he guessed were from post battle surgeries. The microphone boomed his voice across the entire room.

"Okay, ladies, let's get you assigned! You know how this goes down, but regulation says I gotta read it to you, because they think you're some dumbass twelve-year-olds."

There was a collective groan.

"Stow it! If I have to get up and leave the missus to instruct your pansy asses on how to get through a godforsaken teleporter, which we taught you to do TEN YEARS AGO, you bastards have to listen! If we didn't always have one dumbass to get himself killed out of the hundreds of you here, we wouldn't have to DO this shit! So put a cork in your ass!"

The Lieutenant took a breath, shuffled his papers, adjusted his microphone, and began reading, in a mockingly happy voice.

"Greetings! I am your assigner, Lieutenant Barry Nathaniel Murphy. I will be here today to guide you towards your first steps of protecting our fine planets against the Sovereign's evil ways." Lieutenant Murphy looked up. "That's official-speak for killing some crimson cocksuckers. Anywaysâ€¦each of your squads will be divided up into positions for transport. Each Warthog will at least have one driver and one gunner, as to protect the persons from an attack instantaneous to touchdown. Any extra squadmates will occupy the passenger seat. Once assigned, you will drive through the transporterâ€¦"

Murphy pointed behind him to The Transporter, which Elijah couldn't help but stare at with awe. It was huge, it must have been thirty-five feet high. It seemed like one of those Stonehenge monuments they studied about in training, but it was filled with a transparent green light that hummed like plasma.

"â€¦which will take you to your destination. Upon arrival, your squad will occupy the assigned base, protect it, and eliminate the adjacent Potentialist threats. Okay. Can you jackasses handle all that?"

"â€¦wait, what?"

"Jesus Christâ€¦never mind, Snyder. Smith! I'm sure you can handle dicktard here?"

Elijah grinned and caught himself sighing again as he saluted. "As always, sir."

"Good. Maybe he won't shoot himself in the foot when he takes a piss."

As Murphy assigned squads to Warthogs, Elijah could only stare as his non-TBOM friends moved like they were in gelatin for a few seconds, then zapped away to risk their lives for a war that never seemed to end. He wiped the sweat from his brow as he heard Murphy's impatient voice bark, "TBOM! Get your asses up here!"

The six stood at-attention, ready for their assignment.

"Let's seeâ€¦Smith, Snyder, Yates, Stewart, Latham, andâ€¦Patel. Yup, you're all here. Patel, you're in charge, I think you and Smith are the only ones who know what the hell is out there and what will and will not eat you. You're assigned to Blood Gulch Delta Station 333."

Elijah and Shyam nodded. Elijah smiled as he noticed Shyam trying to hide his pride.

"Smith, Stewart, you drive."

Elijah and Sid looked at each other and grinned. Donning their helmets, they raced to their drivers' seats. They loved driving.

"Snyder, Latham, you man the guns."

The two complied, Josh distancing himself as far away from Ben as possible.

"Yates, Patel, you---"

"Wait a damn minute! I was told I would be gunner!"

"Aw, damn it, Yates, it doesn't matter! Just get in the godforsaken passenger seat!"

"It's bullshit! I'm the gun-nut here! If I want anybody shooting a freaking chain gun, it's ME!"

"Maybe if you could see over the turret, I'd let you!"

"You SON OF A BITCH!"

Before anybody could react, Carter had whipped out his pistol and began firing at the top of The Teleporter. As he shot, his eyes never left Murphy, emphasizing he was shooting blindly. Once the gun began to do nothing but click, Carter roared, "How about now, bastard?"

Everyone turned and looked. With twelve bullets, Carter had somehow spelled out a phrase that started with F and rhymed with "Buck You." Murphy turned back to Yates and looked down at Carter with a mix of surprise, nervousness, and a sense of being impressed.

"Ooookayâ€|Yates, you man the guns. Snyder, you're in the passenger seat."

Ben left the chain gun, and a collective sigh of relief came over the room. Everyone felt a little bit safer. When Carter manned up, though, the panic reinstated itself. Ben sat in his seat, not really noticing the change. Josh shrugged and jumped into his seat.

Elijah and Sid started the Warthogs simultaneously. Looking over at his comrade, Elijah gave a "You wanna try it?" look, to which Sid responded with an uncharacteristic mouthing of "Hell yeah!" They both began laughing like maniacs as they burnt out the back tires, letting out two deafening squeals that drowned out Lieutenant Murphy's swears. As they both let the jeeps go, Elijah felt the green light consume him. The last audible sound in the room was the laughter of the six squadmates of Squad TBOM, and the last visible sight was a five-foot-six redhead giving everybody in the room the bird as his image zipped away.

* * *

><p>AN: Eh? Eh? Good? I had fun writing it. Gimme a R/R, and I'll write more. Thanks!

3. Welcome Home

Halo: Defenders' Fall

Disclaimer: My story. Not my game, movie, book, or anything, but my story. Mine.

A/N: Chapter One is one-and-done. Full speed ahead to Chapter Two! I'm sorry it took so long, Writer's Block is a cruel mistress.

Halo: Defenders' Fall

Chapter Two

Welcome Home

Jesus Christ, it was hot.

Shyam Zakir Patel had just gotten used to the cold chill of the assembly room, and then he came out of the glacier and into the frying pan, so to speak. He really hated teleporting. Honestly, he'd much rather waste time in a Hornet and enjoy the view. Sure, the gas cost would be outrageous, but Shyam figured it was better than feeling like every part of your body was sneezing backwards. As Sid peeled rubber into the teleporter, the sudden momentum had thrown Patel backâ€|only to lurch forward when the teleporter slowed the Warthogâ€|only to be thrown back even further once the interdimensional travel began. So besides his muscles trying to force

their way inside of his bones, he now had whiplash to boot.

And the heat! Shyam had passed all of the training regimens: he aced desert survival, dehydration simulation, hell, even a simulation asking him to fix his ship before it crashed into a star. But no heat ever out-burned a 'port. Shyam felt as if he eyes were trying to force their ways into Hell itself. He absolutely hated teleporting. Complete waste of research in his opinion.

Struggling to move his helmet, Shyam looked to his right. Elijah, always trying to look like nothing bothered him, when he always took everybody else's problems as his own. Sure enough, Smith had his jaw clenched and face straight, but Shyam could see beads of sweat on his brow and what he had for muscles tensed up to the extreme. In his gunner's seat, Josh seemed to be enjoying the travel. He leaned back and propped one of his Goliath arms on the gun, like he was riding in a godforsaken Cadillac. Ben seemedâ€¦well, Ben seemed like he was just sitting in a car. Then again, Shyam wasn't sure The Teleporter, or anything else for that matter, could affect Ben's well-being more than it had already been affected.

In his own hog, Carter, Mr. Insanity himself, was clinging onto the gun for dear life, the force of the travel lifting his feet and causing him to have to hold on to the chain gun like a piece of paper stuck on a tree in a hurricane. Shyam could see his mouth moving, but Jesus only knew what kind of words he was spouting. Mentally willing himself to change directions, he glanced at Sid. Sid's face seemed to reflect Shyam's mood. Pissed. Stewart hated 'porting just as much as he did, but Shyam always thought Sid hated it more, because it normally takes a lot to get Gentle Giant mad.

Finally, the light of God appeared. It starts off small, and then gets larger and larger until you reach your destination on the other side, much to the relief of many a soldier induced with motion sickness. As it grew, Shyam breathed a small sigh of relief. This joyride was finally over. He longed to have ground underneath him, where he could think on his feet like he was born to do. The Warthogs accelerated even more, reaching the light with almost literal breakneck speed. The closer they got the more detail Shyam could make out. There were treesâ€¦canyonsâ€¦grassâ€¦a bit of shadeâ€¦as the Warthogs finally slowed down to a complete stop, Shyam smiled, leaned backâ€¦

â€¦and realized he was forty feet in the air.

The millisecond before they began to fall, Carter uttered what was on everyone's mind.

"Shit."

If the Potentialists were there and they didn't know they had arrived, Shyam figured, then the terrified screams of five soldiers and one not-as-bright soldier yelling "Whee!" would certainly alert them of the Reclaimer presence.

As always, in tough spots, and this most definitely qualified as a tough spot, Elijah was the first to think, the first to react, the first to come up with an eloquent plan to save their skins.

"BAIL!"

Close enough.

All six TBOMers abandoned ship at the same time, waiting until the distance was right, then tucking into a roll and rising unharmed. Except for Ben, who managed to spread-eagle the ground and rise unharmed. Idiotic as he was, Ben amazed Shyam with his toughness and resilience. Not to mention his best friend made him laugh, which was hard to do nowadays for Shyam. Ever since the assassination attempt, Shyam had questioned the Parliaments' decisions. He saw no need for an open attack when your opponent is basically about to surrender to you, or so Shyam thought the Sovereign was going to. But no, they had to go shoot up the estate, kill his wife, and send Peak into an inconsolable rage. Way to go, Parliament.

Shyam ignored his political aggravations and did the first priority as team leader: check and make sure you have a team left.

"Everybody okay?" he spouted.

Scanning the area, Shyam noticed everyone was getting up groggily, but seemed to be in good enough shape. They weren't dead yet, so he took that as a good sign. He checked himself over, finding nothing out of the ordinary, brushed off the dirt, and tried to keep a cool head as he issued orders to his squad.

"All right, let's go! No funny business, get into that base on the double!" he barked, doing his best to sound official and high-ranking. Authority positions were hard for Shyam. Since his first day in the Academy, he preferred working on his own, not having to trifle with other people's opinions and personalities. He stayed quiet, stayed focused, and stayed alive. That changed when he was assigned to Squad Hurley K. 44, which Latham had affectionately renamed TBOM. Shyam never really knew what that was supposed to stand for. Hurley K. 44 was unlike any other group of soldiers Shyam had ever been around. You had Elijah, the natural leader. He may have not been a superb military standout, but he unknowingly assumed the role amongst his allies, with his quick thinking and logical decisions. What amazed Shyam the most about Elijah wasn't that he could influence his comrades so easily, it was the fact that he didn't mean to. Everyone listens to Elijah, he mused, except for Elijah.

Then there were Joshua and Sidney, the twin towers of his squad. Joshua was gigantic, and Sid's demeanor alone added a good three inches to him. Shyam was trained to fear no enemy, but he was also trained not to be stupid. He preferred to stay on their good sides, which, despite their physical presence, was a pretty easy task with those two. He looked barbaric, but Latham was just a fun-loving soldier who really liked to kill things. Sidney didn't say much, but in this group Shyam liked that about him.

Carter, on the other hand, was a wild card in Shyam's book. Trigger happy, irrational, and driven solely by testosterone, Yates was the physical embodiment of everything Shyam hated in a soldier. However, when he dropped the crazy-gunman mask, Shyam found Carter to be a respectful, loyal warrior whose fierce devotion to the Reclaimers could not be denied.

Despite their not-so-subtle quirks and differences, Shyam had never seen such chemistry between teammates. During field exercises, or at least the ones where Ben didn't dominate anything that breathed, there was an unspoken understanding between teammates. Elijah and Ben would eliminate any enemies they found, with Carter and Sidney providing sufficient backup, and Joshua being the random spark of military genius they needed in tight spots. _All of this without previous experience with each other._ The rarity of such still caught Shyam in awe. When he first joined Hurley K. 44, he was sure there was some sort of mistake. He was Shyam Zakir Patel, first in his class, and he was assigned to play babysitter with masochists and physical freaks of nature. Over time and training, however, he came to embrace the fatherly role he played. Ironically, since he was considered by many to be young strategical genius, he bonded quickly with Snyder, appreciating the comic relief and bluntness of the blonde killing machine.

Shyam smiled underneath his helmet as he dashed with his comrades into the giant stone monolith that was to be their new home. On the sides, two symmetrical ramps led to the roof, which had a sunroof-like opening in the center of it. The soldiers entered the front, which led down and then split left and right, both ways leading to the center of the base. On the floor was a large spray-painted symbol, the navy insignia of the Reclaimers. The symbol gave Shyam a sense of pride, a way to remember why he was here.

Scattered about the room were multiple boxes, each customized in different ways, all of them labeled. Shyam found his, a cold, grey box with PATEL scratched into it by way of a combat knife. Opening it, he found it was exactly as he left it; organized and efficient. He unloaded his weapons, four identical assault rifles, each with custom scopes and three different modes of fire: full, single shot and three-round burst. He removed the standard medpacks and ammunition, equipped them as necessary, then did his routine check on his squad, something he felt like he would be doing a lot from here on out.

Elijah was excitedly rambling on about something, the way he did when something interested him. He had already holstered two plasma rifles and a UNSC pistol, and was trying to explain the "beauty" of the Needler to Joshua. Shyam knew this would be in vain. Latham lost his left hand as a child, in one of the last known raids by Covenant soldiers. Besides his trusty shotgun, battle rifle, and normal pistol, Joshua had a customized pistol, about 1.5x larger than the standard issued. One side, in blood, was the word REVENGE. The opposite side was inscribed HATE. Latham's pure hatred gave Shyam shudders, considering he was normally a mellow personality. Sid and Ben were holstering their respective weapons, random assortments of heavy weapons. Ben had somehow smuggled two Jackhammer rocket launchers, something that made every soldier uneasy. Sid had a pair of shotguns, multiple grenades, and the like.

From the corner came a whimper, and Shyam rolled his eyes as he saw William Carter James Yates III, on his knees, clutching a Sniper Rifle. But not just any ordinary sniper rifle. Carter wasn't just a homicidal maniac, his bloodlust was hereditary. His father, and his father's father, and his father, and his father, were all wizards with a firearm. This rifle, first created by Carter's great-great-grandfather, had its scope magnified with the

generations, with the current version having a 35x zoom. Not to mention being able to hold thirty-two shots instead of the standard sixteen. Carter loved all of that destructive power in single rifle. Thirty-two shots of headshots, body shots, and even foot shots to make them suffer. Sometimes, Shyam thought, Carter could be one sick bastard.

Once everyone was equipped, Shyam's nervousness overcame him. Why hadn't the Potentialists arrived yet? Surely somebody heard the commotion. He normally made sure that nobody would be aware of their presence, but during a forty-foot-free-fall you find more important things on your mind.

Shyam couldn't ignore his intuition. "Carter!" he barked, with a not-so-well hidden tone of worry in his voice, "Topside, make double-sure there is no Potentialist presence."

Carter scoffed. "Geezâ€¦a please would be niceâ€¦"

Shyam replied with a cold stare.

The redhead shrugged as he walked outside. As he turned to walk up the ramp, he flashed a grin and grabbed his rifle tighter.

Once he had left, Elijah had already begun sketching a map into the wall with his knife. "Okay, while we were falling towards our probable deathsâ€¦" he groaned with annoyance, "I got a quick look at our surroundings. From the looks of it we're flanked by mountain pathsâ€¦"

As he spoke, he added his aforementioned details. "If I'm right, then the Potentialist's half of the canyon is probably symmetrical, although their left side seems a bit more open, leaving them vulnerable to-"

Before Elijah finished his sentence, two loud, low cracks were heard from above, followed by muffled yells of high-pitched obscenities. Shyam's gut took a deep turn, and he mentally prepared himself as Sid touched his helmet mic.

"Carter! Status!"

"What does it SOUND like up here? Reds! WHOOOLE buncha reds! You boys wanna get your share you better hop on it!"

The mic was then filled with Carter's maniacal laughter. "I swear," Josh mumbled, "he is one sick-"

"-bastard." Shyam finished with a sigh. "Sid! Head topside and cover Carter. 'Lijah, Latham, I need you to pull a Code 37, then-"

"-Code 37? What is that?" Josh asked with a coy grin.

"Why, I have no idea, Josh my good man." Elijah responded.

Shyam sighed again. " We don't have time for this!"

Josh couldn't lose his grin. "Then I guess we don't have time for Code 37. Might just have to provide backupâ€¦" He egged Shyam on with a facial expression.

His face in his hand, Shyam conceded. "Run 'Code Zoom Boom'."

With a loud "Woo!" the two leapt out the door.

"All rightâ€|and Ben?"

"Yezzir?"

"Justâ€|don't blow up anything important."

Like a confused pup, Ben cocked his head, although his mindless grin still sat on his face. "Gotcha, bud. I promise, there won't be anything like last time."

"Last time you completely dismembered a security guard with a dull knife."

"He shouldn't have snuck up on me!"

"It was a stealth exerciseâ€|"

"And I was carrying a rocket launcher! That implies that I am not being stealthy!"

Shyam smiled and shook his head, then quickly donned his black helmet. As he became adjusted to the full suit, his HUD pinged to life. The adrenaline pumping through his veins, his trigger finger itching, and his bloodlust on full gear, he stepped out into the light.

Temporarily blinded by the artificial suns made for this planet, Shyam took the moment to shield his eyes with his Assault Rifle. Once his sight was restored, he instantly calculated his situation. There were five green dots on the top of his HUD, all of them pulsing with beating hearts. Their respective tags soon faded into view.

ES_02_

SS_03_

JL_04_

WY_05_

BS_00_

To the left there was his own tag, SP01, along with a vertical shield gauge and a horizontal ammunition gauge. A heartbeat monitor stood at the top right, and just beneath it was an electronic labeling: SHYAM ZAKIR PATEL.

"Carter! Eyesight!"

"We're talking twenty to thirty reds here, sir. By the looks of them a majority aren't well trained, probably just grunt soldiers. One or two high ranking ones, but nothing we can't handle. Before you got here there were about thirty or forty. Sid and I got us a head start." Carter added this last part with an audible chuckle.

Before Shyam could ask anything else about the Potentialist threat, his thoughts were drowned out by the unmistakable sound of the Warthog. Still dented from their rough entrance, it now sported one Joshua Latham and one Elijah Smith, taking wide turns, jumping hills, and basically making as much racket as possible towards the red militia.

"YEEEEEEE-OOOOO!"

Shyam mused. He was outnumbered five to one. His enemy had already studied the terrain. He had roughly five to ten minutes to get settled and make a plan before he was attacked. And he was stuck against this force with Hurley K. 44.

He liked those odds.

* * *

>AN: Okay, I know it's a lot of plot, but it's time for the action parts. lol I can't help it, I'm a plot junkie. R/R! :)

~Jay Diez

End
file.